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ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to investigate the extent of which knowledge of results in various forms (true, none, and false) may modify aesthetic judgment. Seventy-two graduate students were administered an aesthetic judgment test of fifty items. On half of the test, twenty-four subjects received correct feedback and twenty-four received false feedback. Another twenty-four received no feedback. Scores on the first twenty-five, the second twenty-five, and all fifty items constituted the dependent variables. Nine personality variable feedback condition analyses of variance were computed. Feedback was a significant main effect, with the trend of means (from high to low) being subjects in the correct, no, and false conditions, respectively. Only one personality variable (Intolerance of Ambiguity) produced significant effects. Generally, intolerant subjects surpassed tolerant subjects. Intolerant subjects were relatively insensitive to false or no conditions. Tolerant subjects were adversely affected by no and false feedback conditions as compared to the true knowledge of results condition. (Author)

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Abstract

Seventy-two graduate students were administered an aesthetic judgment test of fifty items. On half of the test, twenty-four subjects received correct feedback and twenty-four received false feedback. Another twenty-four received no feedback. Scores on the first twenty-five, the second twenty-five, and all fifty items constituted the dependent variables. Nine personality variable x feedback condition analyses of variance were computed. Feedback was a significant main effect, with the trend of means (from high to low) being subjects in the correct, no, and false conditions, respectively. Only one personality variable (Intolerance of Ambiguity) produced significant effects. Generally, intolerant subjects surpassed tolerant subjects. Intolerant subjects were relatively insensitive to false or no conditions. Tolerant subjects were adversely affected by no and false feedback conditions as compared to the true knowledge of results condition.

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THE EFFECTS OF FEEDBACK AND SELECTED PERSONALITY VARIABLES ON AESTHETIC JUDGMENT

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This study is an attempt to investigate the extent of which knowledge of results in various forms (true, none, and false) may modify aesthetic judgment. Moreover, three personality variables were introduced into the design partly to replicate some of Child's previous findings (1962a, 1962b, 1964, 1965). The investigators, however, intended this study to go beyond Child's studies (a) by using different instrumentation, (b) by analyzing the data primarily with a between subjects design as contrasted with Child's within subjects designs, and (c) by including the feedback and personality variables simultaneously in the design.

The instruments used in this study were the Internal-External Locus of Control (Rotter, 1966); the Meier Art Judgment Test (Meier, 1940); the Test Anxiety Scale (Mandler & Sarason, 1952); and the Tolerance-Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale (Budner, 1962).

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 72 beginning graduate students in education at the University of Illinois.

Stimulus Materials

Only the first 50 items of the Meier Test were used for the experiment. These 50 items were arbitrarily divided into two sections of 25 items each (1-25 and 26-50). Because of possible sequence effects, the three conditions

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(true, false, and no knowledge of results) were counterbalanced. That is, some subjects took 1-25 first and 26-50 second, while others took the reverse sequence.

Rationale of the Analysis

It was not feasible to introduce all variables simultaneously in a 3x3x3x3 factorial design. To have done so would have resulted in small cell sizes and extreme disproportionality. As it was, subjects were randomly assigned to one of the three knowledge of results conditions and were subsequently divided into low, medium, and high groups on one of the personality variables. Thus the basic design was a 3x3 analysis of variance repeated nine times. Because of unequal cell sizes, an unweighted means approximation was used.

Results

Knowledge of results was a significant main effect, whether on the treatment 25 items ($F=6.38$, $df=2/63$, $p < .001$), the follow-up 25 items ($F=4.27$, $df=2/63$, $p < .02$), or on all 50 items ($F=7.40$, $df=2/63$, $p < .001$). The trend was for subjects under the true knowledge of results conditions to have more correct responses than subjects under the no knowledge of results condition, who, in turn, did better than subjects under the false knowledge of results condition (see Tables 1 and 2). Various Scheffé comparisons were computed in order to probe this main effect. With the treatment 25 items, the follow-up 25 items, and all 50 items, certain consistent results were obtained. Subjects under the true condition performed better than the average of those under the no and false conditions ($p < .01$). Moreover, subjects in the true condition did better than subjects in the false knowledge of results condition (p's ranged between .01 and .05). Two other pairwise comparisons (true vs. no and no vs. false) were not significant ($p > .10$).

Whether on the treatment items, the follow-up items, or all 50 items, there were no main or interactive effects ($p > .05$) involving Test Anxiety or Locus

of Control. There was significant main effect ($F=3.09$, $df=2/63$, $p < .05$) and a significant interaction ($F=3.07$, $df=4/63$, $p < .02$) involving Intolerance of Ambiguity for the treatment 25 items. This pattern was not found for the follow-up 25 items where there were no significant effects involving Intolerance of Ambiguity. However, across all 50 items there was a significant Intolerance of Ambiguity main effect ($F=3.09$, $df=2/63$, $p < .05$) and a marginal ($F=1.88$, $df=4/63$, $p < .12$) interaction effect (see Table 3). The main effect of Intolerance of Ambiguity was examined by Scheffé method comparisons. For the treatment 25 items, subjects classified as low in Intolerance of Ambiguity made significantly lower scores ($p < .05$) than the average of subjects with medium and high levels of Intolerance of Ambiguity. This finding also held across all 50 items ($f < .05$). For the entire 50 items, subjects with high Intolerance of Ambiguity performed better than those with low Intolerance of Ambiguity ($p < .05$). On neither the treatment 25 items nor all 50 items were the pairwise comparisons (low vs. medium and high vs. medium) significant ($p < .25$).

To investigate the relations among the three personality variables and scores on the 50-item Meier Art Test, for subjects in the no knowledge of results condition ($N = 24$) the four variables were intercorrelated. Only Intolerance of Ambiguity showed a significant correlation ($r=.51$, $p < .01$) with the Meier Art Judgment Test. The scattergrams of the bivariate distributions revealed no obvious curvilinearity.

Discussion

On a short-term basis, at least, immediate feedback does affect aesthetic judgment. That is, true knowledge of results produced significantly higher aesthetic judgment scores than false feedback, but not significantly higher scores than no feedback at all.

Only one personality variable, Intolerance of Ambiguity, produced any significant main effects or interactions. In general, intolerant subjects had higher aesthetic judgment scores than tolerant subjects. These results tend to be at variance with the findings of Child (1962b, 1965). With respect to the Knowledge of Results X Intolerance of Ambiguity interactions, it seems that the tolerant person (one who scores low) thrives under true knowledge of results and is adversely influenced by false and no knowledge of results. On the whole, a highly intolerant person tends not to be influenced by the various knowledge of results conditions. Come what may, he "sticks to his guns." In some ways this finding is consonant with Child's (1965) data showing that independence of judgment is positively associated with aesthetic judgment.

The findings of this study seem to indicate that individuals characterized as being intolerant of ambiguity are more consistent and accurate judges, and that these persons tend not to revise their judgments in response to immediate reinforcement. By contrast, the highly tolerant person appears to be very sensitive to reinforcement (i.e., modifies his responses according to the immediate reinforcements). Given these results, one might be mildly curious about the personality traits of those final arbiters of aesthetic judgment, the art critics.

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TABLE 1

Mean Number of Items Correct on Treatment 25 Items
(Intolerance of Ambiguity x Knowledge of Results)[a]

Intolerance of Ambiguity	Knowledge of Results					
	True		No		False	
Low	20.25	(8)	15.71	(7)	16.89	(9)
Medium	22.11	(9)	19.40	(10)	16.80	(5)
High	19.43	(7)	22.00	(7)	18.00	(10)

[a]Cell sizes are in parentheses.

TABLE 2

Mean Number of Items Correct on Follow-up 25 Items
(Intolerance of Ambiguity x Knowledge of Results)[a]

Intolerance of Ambiguity	Knowledge of Results					
	True		No		False	
Low	21.50	(8)	18.43	(7)	17.22	(9)
Medium	20.22	(9)	19.60	(10)	18.20	(5)
High	21.00	(7)	20.29	(7)	20.30	(10)

[a]Cell sizes are in parentheses.

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